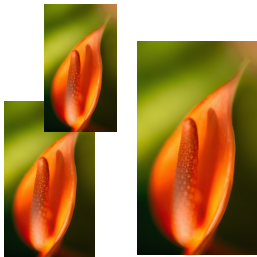
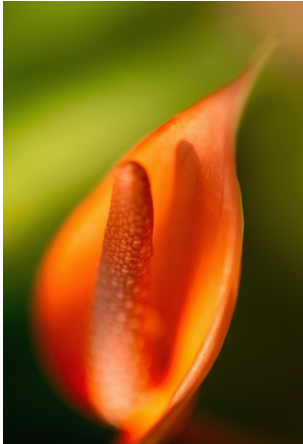


# Conservation Conversation

Volume 1, Issue 3

Spring 2011



## *In this issue:*

- District Reporting
- Budget Hearing Updates
- Sage-Grouse, DEQ 319 Grant Application Schedule
- SWC Open Positions
- Loan Program Improvements
- Southwest Idaho Districts
- CREP Update



## Improved District Reporting

Over the past few years, the Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission and Idaho's Soil Conservation Districts have seen quite a few changes, including reporting requirements for district allocations.

Throughout the rulemaking process for district allocations, Commission has endeavored to create a reporting system that is easy, meets state mandates and is relevant to both the districts and the Commission.

Based on the excellent feedback the Commission received during the past year from the districts, the great discussion generated at the IASCD conference about match funding requirements, and the hard work of the working group during their review of the Match Reports, the Commission is considering a final round of updates to the reports that are required by rule.

How does this affect the districts? Simple!

- The number of annual reports required has been reduced from four to three: Antidegradation Plan with Annual Work Plan; Performance Report; and Financial & Match Report.
- The format is being tested as a universal, fillable PDF form for the Financial & Match Report. All others will allow the district to use a

program or software of their choice to build the report.

- The guidance and instructions for each report has been expanded for clarity and additional information.
- Each report is related to allow the districts to build each report off of the other—no recreating the wheel necessary.
- The reports build in accountability measures to help the districts show due diligence, fiscal responsibility,

and the great work that is being done with the local, state and federal funding.

The Commission invites all district to provide feedback on these updated and improved reporting requirements and to review the draft guidance documents and forms. These updates will go hand in hand with the rulemaking process for district allocations in the near future. See page 4 for more information.

An informational teleconference will be held

to review the updated draft rule, reporting requirements and forms on **Tuesday, April 19, 2011 at 10 a.m. MST / 9 a.m. PST.**

The teleconference details have been distributed to districts, but if more information is needed, please contact the Commission at [info@swc.idaho.gov](mailto:info@swc.idaho.gov).

**Rules carry the  
force and effect of  
law and interpret,  
prescribe or  
implement a law or  
policy or the  
procedure and  
practice  
requirements of an  
Agency**

# Calendar and Events

## APRIL:

- 11—Pre-applications available for DEQ 319 grants (page 8)
- 15—Deadline to submit RCRDP loan applications for May 18 meeting
- 15—Deadline to apply for Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission Administrator position (page 10)
- 15—Deadline to submit application to NRCS for Sage-Grouse Initiative FY 2011 funding (page 7)
- 15—Deadline to submit application to NRCS for Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (page 8)
- 19—Informational teleconference on rulemaking for district allocations (cover page)
- 20—Commission Teleconference (Boise)
- 22—Deadline to apply for Idaho State Forestry Contest (see below)
- 24—Easter Sunday
- 27—Administrative Professionals Day

## MAY:

- 6—Deadline to submit RCRDP loan application for June 7/8 meeting
- 9/10—2011 Idaho Envirothon (Challis—see below)
- 11—Excel Training Webinar (see page 3)
- 12—2011 Idaho State Forestry Contest (Careywood—see below)
- 18—Commission Teleconference (Boise)
- 27—Deadline to submit WQPA invoices for FY2011 (page 5)
- 30—Memorial Day Holiday (all government agencies and banks closed)

## JUNE:

- 7/8—Commission Meeting, Budget Hearing, Rulemaking, Conservation Tour (Sandpoint/Coeur d'Alene—pages 3 & 4)
- 17—Deadline to submit RCRDP loan applications for July 20 meeting
- 30—End of Fiscal Year 2011

## SUMMER:

- July 20, 2011 (tentative) - Commission teleconference
- August 1, 2011—Last day to submit final DEQ 319 grant application (Page 8)

## 2011 Envirothon Correction

Since the last issue of the Conservation Conversation, the dates for the 2011 Idaho Envirothon have been changed to **May 9 and 10, 2011** at the Living Waters Ranch facility in Challis, Idaho. Visit the national Canon Envirothon website at [www.envirothon.org](http://www.envirothon.org) for information on the upcoming competition, which is going to be held July 24-29, 2011 in Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada. The 2011 environmental issue deals with salt and fresh water estuaries, which are semi-enclosed areas where sea water and freshwater mix. For individuals interested in volunteering for the Idaho competition, contact Nancy Weatherstone at 208-888-1890 ext. 102 or [nancy.weatherstone@gmail.com](mailto:nancy.weatherstone@gmail.com).



## Idaho State Forestry Contest



The 2011 Idaho State Forestry Contest is being held on Thursday, May 12, 2011 from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the Delay Farm in Careywood, Idaho. Registration forms are due no later than April 22, 2011. For more information, visit [http://northidahosweds.org/bonner/forestry\\_contest.htm](http://northidahosweds.org/bonner/forestry_contest.htm) or contact Linda O'Hare at 208-263-5310 ext. 100.

# District News

## June 2011 Budget Hearing Update & Guidance

Pursuant to Title 22, Chapter 27 Idaho Code, the Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission shall hold a public hearing to “consider the needs of each soil conservation district and shall base its request for state funds for the soil conservation districts upon the budgets, budget requests, district program and work plans, and work load analysis of the various soil conservation districts.”

Historically, the information presented at these hearings has focused around the local funds and services that each district estimated would be received in order to calculate the amount of the match funding request. During the 2010 legislative session, there was a change to Idaho Code to base the match funding on the prior fiscal year actual funds and services received. Since projecting the match funding in this historical manner no longer makes sense, the Commission and the districts now have the opportunity to explore the possibilities of what these budget hearings can be.

At the budget hearing currently scheduled for June 8, 2011 in northern Idaho, the Commission is encouraging the districts to present any potential funding requests for FY 2012 or FY 2013. For example, regular funding requests like Envirothon or the Forestry Contest or special funding requests like the District Capacity Grant project or other unique conservation projects are requests that the Commission can take under advisement as they consider potential adjustments to the FY 2012 budget or in planning for the upcoming submission of the FY 2013 budget.

Districts may present their budgets, budget request or any additional information in writing at least one week prior to the meeting or in person on June 8, 2011. Presentations may be limited in duration due to time constraints of the meeting. For more information, please contact the Commission staff at [info@swc.idaho.gov](mailto:info@swc.idaho.gov).



## FY 2012 Budget

The legislature has passed and the Governor has signed a budget for the Commission that reflects a 3.9% savings from the current fiscal year, which equates to a \$117,100 decrease in general funds and 16 authorized FTPs.

The Commission has reviewed the appropriation and set a budget for next year which provides over \$1 million in district allocations! Base funding will be \$8,500 per district

(\$433,500) with another \$619,700 available for match funding.

Final match percentages will be determined after FY 2011 actual local funds and services have been submitted, but based on last year's submissions, we project that the State will match almost \$1.50 for every local dollar!

In addition, the Commission has approved a one time payment this

fall of \$850 for each district's base insurance with ICRMP. Unfortunately, the personnel budget set by the legislature is not quite enough to cover all of our existing expenses so we are taking steps to live within our means and ensure that we meet our priority, mandated workload.

The Commission's budget is available online at <http://legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2011/S1152.htm>.

## Excel Training Webinar

On Wednesday, May 11, 2011, the Commission will be holding an Excel Training Webinar in conjunction with the Idaho District Employees Association. The morning session from 10:30 a.m. to noon covers Excel basics and the afternoon session from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. will cover more intermediate topics. Those wishing to participate are encouraged to join one of the group sessions located in Boise, Twin Falls or Idaho Falls, but may join the webinar individually with their own computer and a telephone line. Please contact Jordan Tollefson at 208-733-5380 ext. 139 or any IDEA member for more information.

# District News

## Rulemaking for District Allocations

Last year, the Commission went through the rulemaking process for district allocations and adopted a temporary rule which is set to expire on June 30, 2011. It is now time to finalize this process and adopt a more permanent rule.

This next version of the rule will be considered a Temporary/Proposed Rule. Because the expiration date of the prior rule is June 30, 2011, the Commission will need to adopt a new Temporary Rule that will go into effect July 1, 2011 to ensure there are adequate processes in place in order to get the district allocations out quickly and efficiently in FY2012.

Upon adoption by the Commission, the Temporary status allows the rule to take effect on July 1, 2011. The Rule is called Temporary/Proposed until it is submitted to the Administrative Rules Coordinator in final form and then is referred to as a Pending Rule. These terms will be helpful as we move through this process.

### General Timeline for Commission Rulemaking:

- Apply to Division of Financial Management (DFM) for permission to conduct rulemaking.
- Prepare notice of intent to conduct rulemaking.
- Share information with interested stakeholders.
- Commission adoption of Temporary Rule and approval for publication of Proposed Rule.
- Rulemaking paperwork is filed with Administrative Rules Coordinator.
- Proposed Rule is published in Administrative Bulletin.
- 21-day comment period.
- Agency review and consideration of any comments received and conduct public hearing if requested.
- Adoption of Pending Rule by Commission and approval for publication.
- Pending Rule is published in Administrative Bulletin.
- Submission of Pending Rule by Coordinator to legislative committees.

mittees.

- Review of the Pending Rule by germane committees of the legislature.
- Final adoption or rejection of rule in whole or in part.

Pending the approval from DFM, the Commission staff will be holding an informational teleconference to review the draft Temporary/Proposed Rule, discuss the updated and improved reporting requirements and review the draft guidance documents and forms. All district supervisors, staff and other interested stakeholders are invited to participate and provide feedback.

The district input and review from conference calls, meetings and the working group during this past year was invaluable to the Commission as we considered improvements and clarifications to existing processes, reports and requirements. Please plan to join us, but if you cannot, feel free to send written comments or questions to the Boise office.

## The Rulemaking Process: Resources and Learning

To learn more about the lawmaking process in the state of Idaho, visit the websites listed below.

The Commission encourages the districts and other interested stakeholders to participate and provide feedback during the rulemaking process.

### Idaho Administrative Rules, Rulemaking Manual and Process:

- <http://adm.idaho.gov/adminrules/>
- [http://adm.idaho.gov/adminrules/bulletin/rule\\_draftmanual.pdf](http://adm.idaho.gov/adminrules/bulletin/rule_draftmanual.pdf)
- <http://adm.idaho.gov/adminrules/bulletin/May2010%20Training.pdf>

### How a Bill Becomes a Law—Idaho Legislature:

- <http://legislature.idaho.gov/about/howabillbecomesalaw.htm>

### Idaho Constitution, Statutes and Administrative Rules:

- <http://legislature.idaho.gov/idstat/IC/Title003.htm>
- <http://legislature.idaho.gov/idstat/TOC/IDStatutesTOC.htm>
- <http://adm.idaho.gov/adminrules/agiindex.htm>





# District News

## Strategic Plan Updates Coming

The Commission has named a small group from the partnership to begin brainstorming and drafting updates to the Commission's strategic plan.

Commissioners Dwight Horsch and Dave Radford will co-chair the working group which consists of - Steve Becker (IASCD, Nez Perce), Karma Bragg (IDEA, Custer), Herman Collins (Bonner), Jim Dixon (West Side), Kent Foster (Ada) and Rick Pearson (Balanced Rock).

The working group has met three times and will meet

again on April 14<sup>th</sup> to finalize a draft for circulation to all districts for review in late April.

The focus of the working group is to produce an updated strategic plan that identifies goals, objectives and strategies that enhance the conservation partnership through shared responsibility and accountability.

For more information, contact Delwyne Trefz at 208-896-4544 ext. 111 or any of the working group members.

## Reminder: QuickBooks Conversion

In the past, the Commission recommended that the districts utilize QuickBooks Online as their accounting program and paid the annual user fees on behalf of each district using the online software. Last year, the Commission opted not to renew this recommendation but budgeted the annual fees for the duration of FY 2011. This adjustment period was implemented to allow the districts one year to research options for their accounting software and make any necessary conversions during that period.

As a reminder, on June 30, 2011, each district will be responsible for their own accounting software and user fees. There will not be any restrictions or recommendations, but the Commission does encourage all districts to examine all available options and choose the option that works best with their business operations, budget and needs. Please keep in mind that any conversions to a different program may require a period of time for the conversion to ensure that all information transfers accurately. Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts has options for discounted QuickBooks programs and services. Contact Nancy Weatherstone at 208-888-1890 ext. 102.

## Water Quality Program for Agriculture

Here we are again, closing in on the end of another Fiscal Year which ends June 30, 2011. Commission staff has been corresponding with each WQPA project individually on their budgets, projections, close-out dates, and status of pre-approved projects.

The deadline to submit all WQPA

invoices is May 27, 2011. The Commission needs to know the balance of unexpended WQPA funds in order to process the funds either through district allocations or by encumbering the funds for the following fiscal year. By encumbering the funds, it will lessen the impact to the FY 2012 Trustee & Benefit budget.

To date, \$108,898 has been spent on BMPs, there is currently \$91,773 held in obligation for pre-approved BMPs, and a remaining balance of \$85,689 (FY 2011 WQPA budget was \$286,360).

For more information, please contact Lance Holloway, SWC Ag Program Specialist, at 208-332-1790.

## Conservation Block Grant Program

The Commission is very appreciative of the interest and volunteers for a Working Group to brainstorm the possibility of a Conservation Block Grant Program.

Unfortunately, funds will not be available in the FY 2012 budget for these block grants, so the effort to develop policy is on hold for now.

For more information or to discuss future plans please contact Roger Stutzman at 208-543-6824 or [mrstutz@filertel.com](mailto:mrstutz@filertel.com).

## District News

### Burkhardt Receives Governor's Award



*Burkhardt, left, and Governor Butch Otter*

Julie Burkhardt, supervisor with the Adams Soil and Water Conservation District, was recently selected by Governor Butch Otter to receive the 2011 Governor's Award for Excellence in Agriculture at the Idaho Ag Summit in Boise, Idaho.

Burkhardt's award for Environmental Stewardship comes as a result of her years of involvement in outreach and advocacy with the conservation district, cattle association, cooperative weed management area and resource conservation and development council.

The Environmental Stewardship award is bestowed to individuals that demonstrate a commitment to maintaining and improving the quality of the air, water or soil as a result of innovative practices, technologies and/or partnerships.

Burkhardt has been successful in securing grants for projects such as restoration of the Indian Valley Community Hall Board and funding to build facilities and acquire equipment for a county-wide weed program. Her most recent success has been securing two Department of Environmental Quality \$ 319 grants to restore the stream bank of the Little Weiser River.

Part of this project has involved a process known as willow weaving, which is a wet and physical process where water jet stingers drill holes into the river bank. Large, pre-cut willow branches are inserted into the holes followed by smaller branches being woven in between to create a sturdy, basket-like bank wall. Burkhardt and the local volunteer group, Rivermenders, willow weaved a 300-foot section of river bank on a wide sweeping corner that erodes during high water events. Within a year, the new willow stocks will root and grow, helping the river bank stabilize and stay in place. The weaving practice is a proven success, saving soil and farmland and enhancing wildlife habitat.

Kathy O'Neill, a landowner on the west side of the Little Weiser River benefitting from Burkhardt's outreach, lives near a hundred-year old apple tree that has provided local wildlife with afternoon snacks throughout the years but was at risk due to the exposed roots from the soil erosion along the stream bank.

"We were going to lose that ranch landmark that so many deer have depended on," said O'Neill. "The river bank is basically gone, and now thanks to Julie and her willow weaving idea, I think it will survive. All the community, the four-legged and the two-legged will benefit from it."

*Article compiled from Adams Soil & Water Conservation District article and information from the Larry Branen Idaho Ag Summit website at [www.idahoagsummit.org](http://www.idahoagsummit.org).*

## Tidbits

- **Laurie McCall** resigned from East and West Cassia SWCD in January to take a position with Minidoka County. **Megan Heward** was hired as the new administrative assistant and can be reached at 208-678-1225. Laurie will continue to work part-time for the Minidoka district on Wednesday afternoons and can be reached at 208-436-4777.
- The Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts is happy to announce two new ways to communicate with partners and stakeholders. Their blog at <http://iascd.wordpress.com> is a cornerstone for news and information for everything relating to districts. Also, they are hopeful to reach new audiences with their Facebook page and stimulate discussion about non-regulatory conservation in Idaho.

## Around the State



Contact: Alexis Collins, Public Affairs Specialist  
Boise, Idaho 208-685-6978  
[Alexis.Collins@id.usda.gov](mailto:Alexis.Collins@id.usda.gov)

### Funding Available to Improve Sage-Grouse Habitat in Idaho

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service increased program funding this year to help farmers and ranchers protect declining sage-grouse populations and habitat in Idaho.

The Sage-grouse Initiative (SGI) helps pay for putting specific conservation practices in place that will improve sage-grouse habitat or reduce threats to bird survival. These practices may also improve rangeland conditions. Idaho received just over \$3 million for the initiative this year.

Producers can apply for the Sage-grouse Initiative at any time. Applications received before April 15 will be ranked for funding in fiscal year 2011. Landowners in the historic range for sage-grouse are eligible to apply for the initiative.

"The Sage-grouse Initiative supports both sustainable ranching and healthy sage-grouse populations by focusing on improving rangeland conditions," said Jeff Burwell, Idaho NRCS State Conservationist. "Some of the practices used to improve sage-grouse habitat are the same practices required to maintain healthy grazing land for livestock."

NRCS spent over \$1 million in 2010, the first year for the Sage-grouse Initiative. Producers across southern Idaho used the initiative to help fund projects that enhanced sage-grouse habitat and also improved range condition such as:

- Seeding rangeland to increase availability of sage-grouse food plants and improve livestock forage;
- Installing new fencing and water developments to assist grazing management;
- Removing juniper trees in key breeding, brood-rearing and wintering sites to restore sage-grouse habitat and increase livestock forage production; and
- Improving grazing systems to incorporate a rest period to improve sage-grouse cover during the nesting season.

Declining sage-grouse populations and habitat across the west generated interest in helping the species so that it will not need protection under the Endangered Species Act. The species depends on sagebrush for cover and food and are found at elevations ranging from 4,000 to over 9,000 feet.

For more information on the initiative, contact your local NRCS office or visit our Web site [http://www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/sage\\_grouse/index.html](http://www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/sage_grouse/index.html).



*Photo courtesy of Gary Kramer, US Fish & Wildlife Service.*

## Adequate Water Supply Forecast

Idaho's mountain snowpack will still provide an adequate water supply this season despite weather patterns that pushed winter precipitation to other parts of the country according to hydrologists with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

NRCS measures the mountain snowpack monthly January through June to provide snow runoff predictions and water supply forecasts used in managing Idaho's water resources. February's snow survey shows the mountain snowpack ranges from 80% to 125% of average.

"Above average snowpacks gained from early winter precipitation carried central Idaho through the mid-January to mid-February dry spell," said Ron Abramovich, NRCS Water Supply Specialist. "More precipitation is needed in this area to boost water supplies."

For the full report on February's snowpack, precipitation, runoff and water supply predictions for specific basins, please view the March 2011 Water Supply Outlook Report online at [www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/snow](http://www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/snow) and click on the 'Water Supply' link.

## Around the State

### AWEP Funding Available for Farmers in ESPA Region

Farmers in the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer region can apply for special Agricultural Water Enhancement Program funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to carry out water conservation practices. The sign-up period runs through April 15, 2011.

The Idaho Water Resources Board (IWRB) received special funding through USDA's Agricultural Water Enhancement Program to help stabilize the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA). The project is a joint effort by the Idaho Water Resources Board and the NRCS.

"The Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer provides all or part of the water supply for more than two million acres of

irrigated agriculture in eastern Idaho," said Jeff Burwell, Idaho NRCS State Conservationist. "This project aims to get more water into the aquifer to help sustain it for the farms, industries and towns that depend on the water it provides."

The IWRB identified five actions to help reduce ground water withdrawals and increase water reaching the aquifer through infiltration and recharge: Aquifer demand reduction; Conversion to dry land farming; Transition to crops with lower water requirements; Conversion from ground irrigation water to surface water; and, Enhancing irrigation systems to improve water delivery.

Farmers can apply for funding to in-

stall conservation practices related to these five priorities. Financial support is available through the NRCS and producers apply to and contract directly with NRCS.

"Work that may qualify for funding includes converting irrigated crops to dryland, replacing leaky canals and diversion structures with pipe or concrete, converting ground water irrigation sources to surface water sources, or converting surface irrigation to sprinkler systems," Burwell said.

Stop in your local NRCS field office to find out if this voluntary program can help you. For office locations go to the NRCS Web site at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/> and look for "Find a Service Center."

### DEQ 2012 Nonpoint Source Water Quality 319 Grant Cycle

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has announced the start of the 2012 Nonpoint Source Water Quality § 319 grants funding cycle.

The pre-application and application will be available online April 11, 2011 along with the Project Application Guidance and information on how to submit an application. The pre-application period closes on May 8, 2011.

The last day to submit a final application is Monday, August 1, 2011. DEQ will announce the list of projects to be funded by December 31, 2011. Applicants will be notified in writing by January 30, 2012 with funding to be available by May, 2012.

For more information, visit the DEQ website at [http://www.deq.idaho.gov/Application/319G\\_New](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/Application/319G_New).

### First-of-its-kind Energy Information Guide Unveiled in Idaho

Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter announced that the Idaho Strategic Energy Alliance (ISEA) has completed work on the Idaho Energy Primer, an educational booklet designed to provide information on the sources, production, distribution and use of energy in the state to help Idaho citizens and businesses make informed decisions about our energy future.

The ISEA was established by the Governor to help develop effective and long-lasting responses to energy challenges in Idaho and assist in development of a sound energy portfolio for the state.

The ISEA consists of over a dozen task forces staffed by volunteer experts working in areas including base-load resources, biogas, biofuels, forest biomass, geothermal, hydropower, solar, energy efficiency and conservation and transmission.

"The Energy Primer, based on the efforts of a wide variety of experts, provides Idaho citizens with a fact-based, unbiased information resource about energy options," said Steven Aumeier, chairman of ISEA's Board of Directors.

"Our state's economic growth and our citizens' quality of life are dependent on the availability of reliable, affordable energy," Governor Otter said. "The Strategic Energy Alliance Council and I thank all those involved, as well as their organizations, for their support of the Alliance and for creating the Idaho Energy Primer."

The Energy Primer is available at [http://www.energy.idaho.gov/energyalliance/d/isea\\_primer\\_new.pdf](http://www.energy.idaho.gov/energyalliance/d/isea_primer_new.pdf). More detailed information can be found in the task force reports on the OER website [www.energy.idaho.gov](http://www.energy.idaho.gov).



# Around the State

## High Country RC&D

The High Country RC&D Council is based in Rexburg, Idaho and covers ten counties in eastern Idaho including Bonneville, Butte, Clark, Custer, Fremont, Jefferson, Lemhi, Madison and Teton. Their mission to promote, assist and deliver local RC&D efforts, projects and programs is more than just a statement. The council is involved in land and water conservation projects, land management, and community and council development.

During 2010, projects included continued efforts to protect Henry's Lake from Eurasian water-milfoil, quagga and zebra mussels. The project added a fourth boat washing station to aid in their efforts. Over 2,000 boats were washed at Henry's Lake during the 2010 boating season.

Additionally, HCRC&D is involved with cloud seeding in hopes of increasing the snow pack along the Upper Snake River Basin, which will increase runoff and hydropower in the spring.

An educational weed trailer was purchased in cooperation with the Upper Snake and Henrys Fork Cooperative Weed Management Area. The weed trailer will be used throughout the area to educate the community about terrestrial and aquatic noxious weeds.

For more information, contact the HCRC&D staff at 208-356-5213.



## Three Rivers RC&D

Three Rivers RC&D and North Bingham Soil Conservation District have developed a partnership with the Eastern Idaho Grazing Association and the Bureau of Land Management to complete a riparian protection project along the Blackfoot River.

This partnership was able to obtain \$319 grant funding from the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality for approximately \$93,500 to install fencing and construct a cattle watering facility; the total project budget is \$178,183. Most of the fencing was completed in September 2010 and the cattle watering facility will be completed in the summer of 2011.

Additional fencing will be installed in the summer of 2012. The Eastern Idaho Grazing Association, Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission, North Bingham Soil Conservation District, and Idaho Department of Lands are providing match for the grant. Steve Smith with the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission has been instrumental in

providing technical advice to guide the project and Donnell Fluckiger provided designs for the cattle watering facility. Kathy Moeykens, assistant with the North Bingham Soil Conservation District, worked

with BLM staff to conduct site inspections to ensure that fencing was properly installed.

Three Rivers RC&D serves Bannock, Bingham and Power Counties in addition to the surrounding cities and the Fort Hall Indian Reservation.

In addition to the 319 grant, the council is also sponsors the Wildland Fire Education Program, facilitates the Portneuf Watershed Partnership, and have a Community Forestry Program.

Since 2002, the council has worked with the Shoshone-Bannock tribal leaders to address pesticide use and practices in relation to their potato production practices in order to protect groundwater.

For more information, contact the Three Rivers RC&D staff at 208-237-4628, ext. 102.



*Project Partners conducting a site visit in June 2010*

## Commission Corner

### Administrator Farewell



Thanks to each and every one of you for all that you do for conservation in Idaho! It has been my pleasure to work with all of you and see the success of your efforts over time. At this time, I am very excited to be in a position to start my own consulting firm that will focus on government affairs, strategic planning and executive search – Summit Business Solutions.

The Commissioners have accepted my voluntary resignation effective May 6, 2011. The Commissioners want to be sure this is the smoothest transition possible and would appreciate your help in circulating the position announcement and encouraging people to apply before the April 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. The announcement can be found at [www.idaho.gov](http://www.idaho.gov) under "Find a State Job". Commissioner Dick Bronson is the point of contact for this process and can be reached at 208-739-2169 or email [rlb@srvinet.com](mailto:rlb@srvinet.com). To be sure that SWC operations and activities continue seamlessly in any short gap between Administrators, Commission employee Bill Lillibridge will serve as Acting Administrator effective May 8, 2011.

Over the past couple of years, our staff and attendees at Commission meetings have heard me quote a variety of books ranging from "A Cowgirl's Guide to Life" to "Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun". My last quote for all of you has been repeated often enough that I will have to give an anonymous source credit - "Accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative."

Based on so many discussions in so many places, I know that everyone involved understands the importance of working together as a partnership in a shared focus and love for conservation. We know that we need individual parts of the partnership to be as strong as possible so that the synergy we find in working together is maximized! As with any relationship, there are bound to be good times and tough times - but, if everyone involved pitches in and sticks with it, you will continue to survive, evolve and grow.

In closing, I continue to be impressed with the Idahoans committed to conservation and am sure that in working together you will meet any challenges that come your way and cross new frontiers that haven't even been imagined yet!

Thanks again for the opportunity to be involved and best wishes, Sara

### Governor Seeks Applicants for SWC Commission

As you probably know, there are five commissioners serving staggered terms. Bill Flory's second term expires June 30, 2011 and although he greatly appreciates the opportunity to serve the conservation partnership, he has indicated that he will not be able to serve a third term.

The Governor's office is encouraging any and all interested people to apply for the upcoming vacancy on the Commission. Please note there is a required "Application for Appointment" and "Authorization for Background Check" that must be completed, printed, signed and mailed along with a current resume by anyone interested. The Governor's staff has stressed that anyone interested may apply and that their applications should be submitted directly to his office by June 1st so that he can consider all possible candidates. In addition, individual districts, or the Association, may submit a list of suggested names for the Governor's consideration.

As background, Idaho Code does state that:

"In appointing commission members the governor shall give consideration to geographic representation. Commission members shall be chosen with due regard to their demonstrated expertise including, but not limited to, knowledge of and interest in water quality and other

*(Continued on page 11)*

# Commission Corner

## Loan Program Improvements

At a recent Commission meeting, the Resource Conservation and Rangeland Development Program policy was updated to provide clarity to existing application procedures and project requirements.

One major shift in policy was to delete restrictions that prevented applicants from starting on a conservation project prior to Commission approval. Now, **applicants may begin work on a project with the understanding that there is not a guarantee of their application being approved.** Because of the length of time the entire application process can take, many potential applicants found they were missing a window of opportunity to install practices during good weather and without disturbing their regular farming or ranching operations.

Conservation plan projects and

practices that have been completed or previously installed prior to Commission approval are still ineligible for funding.

Another improvement included clarification to the application process itself, which now **allows the applicant to simultaneously have the conservation plan reviewed and ranked by the local conservation district AND submit the loan application to the Commission for consideration.** Prior to this clarification, applicants were faced with the possibility of waiting 60 days or longer just for application review by the Commission. Now, there is the potential for the applicant to start and finish the process in 30 to 45 days.

In addition to speeding up the amount of time it takes the Commission and districts to process an appli-

cation, this dual-application process helps to protect the applicant's private and financial information.

There are still funds available to loan for conservation projects and the Commission is accepting applications to review at the May 18, 2011 meeting. The deadline to submit applications and other required material is April 15, 2011.

Interest rates for the loan program are at an all-time low:

- 2% APR for loans 1-7 years
- 3% APR for loans 8-12 years
- 4% APR for loans 13-15 years

For more information about the RCRDP loan program, visit the Commission website at <http://swc.idaho.gov> under Programs and Services.

*(Continued from page 10)*

natural resource issues, production agriculture, banking or other similar financial experience or experience as a county commissioner. The soil and water conservation districts may submit to the governor a list of up to three (3) names for each vacancy on the commission and the governor may, in his discretion, consider any such submission in the appointment of commission members..."

This appointment will be for a five year period beginning July 1, 2011. Idaho Code is also clear that Commissioners serve at the pleasure of the Governor and that those appointments are confirmed by the state Senate.

To see the Idaho code in its entirety go to - <http://legislature.idaho.gov/idstat/Title22/T22CH27SECT22-2718.htm>

For more information, about Commission responsibilities, activities and programs go to - [www.swc.idaho.gov](http://www.swc.idaho.gov)

To apply for the opening go to - <http://gov.idaho.gov/pdf/ApplicationForAppointment.pdf>

For questions about the position and time commitment needed, feel free to contact any of the Commissioners. For questions or more information about the appointment process contact Ann Beebe in Governor Otter's office at 208/334-2100 or [ann.beebe@gov.idaho.gov](mailto:ann.beebe@gov.idaho.gov).



# Commission Corner

## Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

The Idaho Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a federal-state cooperative conservation program that targets reducing groundwater consumptive use from cropland and marginal pastureland. Participants receive cost-share assistance and rental payments for the 15 year contract period in exchange for converting the enrolled land to native grasses, forbs, and shrubs improving soil quality, water retention and wildlife habitat. The water savings each year helps to reduce the stress on the demands of the aquifer.

We encourage anyone interested in the program to contact either the Idaho Soil & Water Conservation staff or their local Farm Services Agency office (FSA).

Annual rental rates range from \$124 to \$134 per acre depending upon location and type of irrigation system that will be retired. An additional \$30 incentive is offered for ground enrolled within the Idaho Ground Water Appropriators (IGWA) areas.

Cost for establishment of native grasses varies depending upon individual locations and weather related challenges. Ground preparation, the cost of seed, seeding,

chemical, and clipping are all cost shared at 50% by FSA.

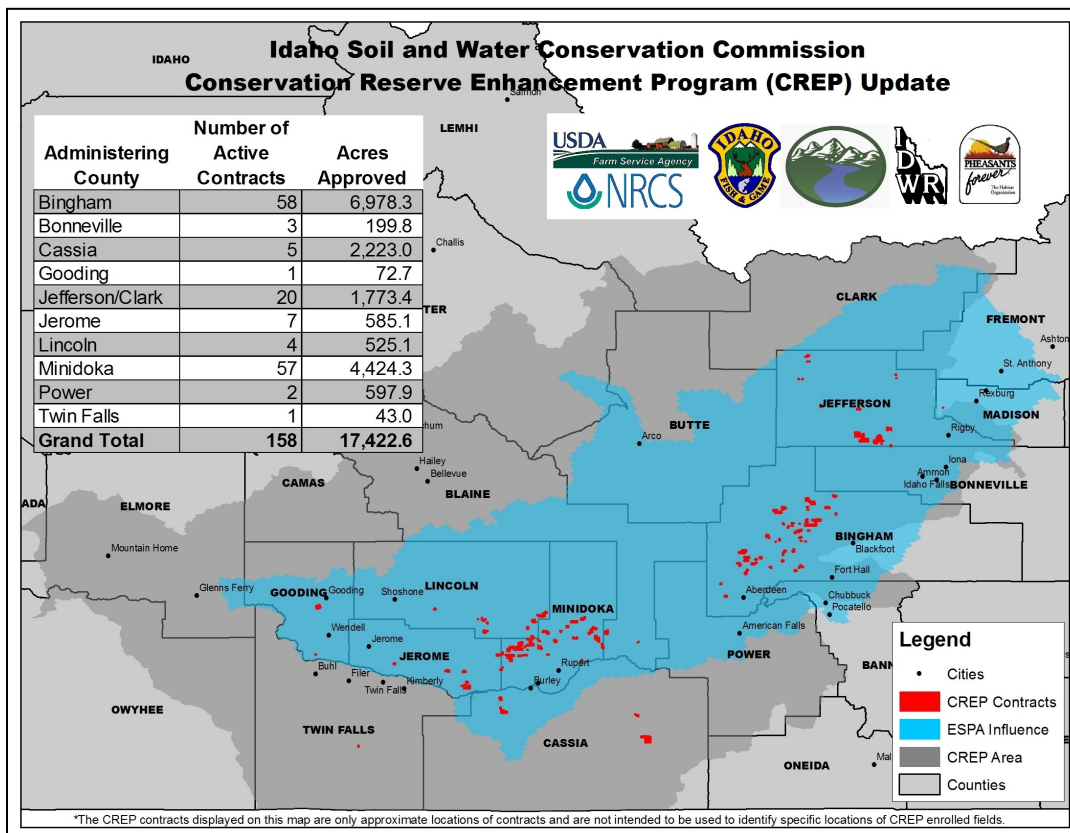
New changes to the program this past year include:

- Farmland with Non-Highly Erodible soils is now eligible for enrollment in the program.
- Eligibility dates for the program in regards to cropping history have changed from 1996-2001 to 2002-2007. Watering history eligibility dates will soon be changed to mirror the cropping history dates.
- CREP acres in a county do not count towards that particular county's limit for CRP acres.
- Land enrolled in the CREP is also eligible for the new Idaho Fish and Game Voluntary Public Access-Habitat Improvement Program (VPA-HIP). Willing Landowners who open their private property to public walk-in hunting and fishing access receive an additional \$1.25/acre per year.

For more information about the CREP, please contact:

Chuck Pentzer, CREP Coordinator,

[Chuck.Pentzer@swc.idaho.gov](mailto:Chuck.Pentzer@swc.idaho.gov) or 208-324-2501 ext. 114.





# We Are Conservation

## Southwest Idaho

### Adams Soil & Water Conservation District

Ferrel Crossley, Chair



Collecting Wolman Pebble Counts on Mud Creek

In 2010 staff from the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission, the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts, the Adams Soil and Water Conservation District, and the

Department of Environmental Quality teamed up to work on a grant project. Stream assessment data were collected from forested and meadow rangeland streams in the Little Salmon River subbasin located in central Idaho near New Meadows.

Our objective was to combine staff and resources to gather stream data for TMDL development and project implementation. The Stream Visual Assessment Protocol (SVAP), the Stream Erosion Condition Inventory (SECI), bank erosion measurements, Wolman Pebble Counts, Rosgen channel type, width/depth measurements, solar pathfinder data, vegetation inventory, and geo-referenced

points were used to establish the current condition of impaired streams. Water quality concerns and target areas for implementation were identified during the assessments.

This collaborative effort allowed for more efficient data collection and improved sharing of data among agencies. We would like to thank all of the landowners who gave us permission to assess streams on their property. This project was funded by a grant through EPA Region 10.

For more information about this project, contact the Adams Soil & Water Conservation District at 208-253-4668 or [aswd@ctcweb.net](mailto:aswd@ctcweb.net).

### Bruneau River Soil & Water Conservation District

Mark Frost, Chair

The Bruneau River Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Directors in agreement with the Idaho State Department of Agriculture will be operating mandatory watercraft inspection stations again this year. The stations will be located near the intersection of Hwy. 51 and Hwy. 78 near Bruneau, Idaho and on Hwy. 95 near Marsing, Idaho. The stations are scheduled to open on April 2<sup>nd</sup> and will be open from 7 a.m., to 7 p.m., seven days a week.

#### Boaters should expect inspections!

The purpose of these stations is to inspect watercraft coming from outside of Idaho. Watercraft inspectors will be looking for high-risk boats that have been in quagga mussel- and zebra mussel-impacted states. Boats will be inspected for any attached mussels and/or standing water. Owners will be asked where they have boated in the previous 30

days. **It is important that boaters arrive in Idaho with a clean, drained and dry watercraft.**

Zebra mussels and quagga mussels are invasive species. They are European in origin and range in size from microscopic to the size of a fingernail, depending on the life stage. They are prolific breeders and attach themselves to hard and soft surfaces, fouling freshwater ecosystems and clogging intake pipes that draw water from infested water bodies. They cause significant maintenance challenges for raw-water systems, requiring millions of dollars annually to treat.

The state is seeking the public's help to prevent the introduction of this invasive species. Boats are the primary transporters of zebra mussels and quagga mussels. Mussels attached to watercraft or trailers can



Bruneau Inspection Site

easily be transported to other water bodies. Water in boat engines, bilges, live wells and buckets can carry microscopic mussel larvae (veligers) to other water bodies. Multiple state and federal agencies are urging boaters and watercraft users to clean, drain and dry boats and equipment before entering Idaho.

Contact Bruneau River SWCD at 208-845-2299. See page 15 for prevention tips.

# We Are Conservation

## Southwest Idaho

### Canyon Soil Conservation District

Richard Gunning, Chair

#### Canyon 319 Project Tour/Lunch



September 17, 2010 the Canyon Soil Conservation District (CSCD) and the Watershed Advisory Group (WAG) hosted their first tour/lunch for Water Quality Improvement funded by a 319 of the Clean Water Act Grant.

There were twenty two participants visited these projects. They visited one of the three surface irrigation to drip irrigation projects funded. Pictured is a drip irrigation system installed on 50 acres. Expected improvements are 248 tons of sediment, 248 lbs. total phosphorus, 1.9 tons nitrate and 95 AF water conserved.

Conversion of a surface irrigation system to a pivot irrigation system with regulating reservoir on 31 acres was completed in 30 days. Estimated improvements include saving 167 tons of sediment, 167 lbs. total phosphorus and 1.2 tons nitrate.

Nine sediment basins were installed to conserve resources on 205 acres. These are expected to save 6 tons sediment/acre which equals 1,230 tons of sediment saved and 1,238 lbs. total phosphorus conserved.



The cost of the projects were \$163,474.50.

This fall work begins on the Steam Bank Stabilization project.

For more information contact the Canyon SCD at 454-8684 EXT 126 or Lower Boise Watershed Council at 383-6312/383-6355.



### Boise River Tour

By Marcy Winger

With the work in progress on cleaning up the Boise River through the 319 projects, it was great to see the river at another view. Several members of Ada and Canyon County NRCS field staff, along with Canyon Soil Conservation District (SCD) members David Marchbanks and Mike Swartz, joined members of the Watershed Advisory Group (WAG), when they floated the Boise River for their annual float trip on July 13, 2010.

The day started off with a quick tour of a Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) project at Jerry Glenn's and of the City of Boise's planned constructed wetland. The group discussed some problems they see with sediment and nutrients being dumped into the Boise River through various drains. Wetlands catch water from drains and give sediment a chance to settle to the bottom of a pond. The amount of sediment flowing into the Boise River is now reduced and the water quality increased.





# We Are Conservation

## Southwest Idaho

### Payette Soil & Water Conservation District

JoAnn Smith, Chair

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Sustainable Ag Symposium

The Payette SWCD teamed up with the Malheur Conservation District out of Ontario Oregon to present the second annual Sustainable Agriculture Symposium on February 17, 2011. The Symposium was held at the Four Rivers Cultural Center in Ontario. 128 people attended the one day seminar and feedback was very positive. The symposium included presentations by a variety of experts as well as booths and displays for participating vendors. The symposium provides a venue for local agricultural producers and the general public to learn more about soil health and productivity.



This year's symposium included presentations on "Variable Rate Fumigation for Healthy Soils, Crops, and your Wallet" by Harry Kreeft of Western Laboratories, Lynn Rogers of Microbial Matrix Systems, Inc. spoke on "Soil ABC's: Agronomy, Biology and Compost", and the University of Idaho's Mir Seyedbagheri discussed "Organic Matter of Soils to Meet Crop Demands and Win the Battle With Invaders". To lighten the subject matter a little, John Taberna, Sr. (Western Laboratories) made a lunchtime presentation on "How to Grow a Giant Pumpkin". The afternoon sessions hit on the hot topic of "Understanding Glyphosate Effects on Plants and Their Environment" by Dr. Don Huber of Purdue University, followed by "What a Soil Test Really Says" by Marvin Miller of Integrated Biological Systems, Inc., and a presentation by Steve Norberg of Oregon State University on "No-Till and Strip Tillage for Weed Control".

Please contact the Payette SWCD at 208-642-4402 for more information on the Agriculture Symposium.



### Invasive Species Prevention Tips for Boaters

All boaters are urged to take the following steps to prevent the introduction of the mussels to Idaho:



- Inspect all exposed surfaces – small mussels feel like sandpaper to the touch
- Wash the hull thoroughly, preferably with hot water
- Remove all plant and animal material
- Drain all water and dry all areas
- Drain and dry the lower outboard unit
- Clean and dry all live wells
- Empty and dry any buckets
- Dispose of all bait in the trash
- Wait five days and keep watercraft dry between launches into different waters



# We Are Conservation

## Southwest Idaho

### Owyhee Conservation District

Charles Chadez, Chair

#### 2010 OWYHEE CONSERVATION FARMERS OF THE YEAR by Diane French, NRCS

Sixth-generation cattle ranchers Ed and Debby Wilsey have made ranching a way of life for over 30 years. For the last 16 years the Wilsey Ranch has been located along McBride Creek, twenty-five miles south of Marsing off Highway 95. Their ranch includes 975 acres of grass pasture, 280 acres of hay ground, and a BLM grazing allotment of roughly 10,000 acres. On average the Wilseys run between 250 to 300 head of livestock, including 150 cow/calf pairs, 75-100 yearlings and replacement heifers, horses and an assortment of hogs.

Over the years Ed and Debby Wilsey have always upheld a vision of sustainable land stewardship. Wildlife such as anelope, deer, sage grouse, quail, rabbits and birds of prey seasonally migrate or make their home on the Wilsey Ranch. Two large irrigation reservoirs contain fish and migratory waterfowl and shore birds are frequently seen stopping for a meal or rest. Diverse species of native wildflowers can be found in several lightly grazed pastures contributing to the health of native pollinators. In conjunction with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Owyhee Conservation District they have incorporated several conservation practices into their ranching and hay farming to improve on their overall resource management system.

Historically, over 150 acres of hay fields with 3 to 8% slopes directly above McBride Creek were flood and furrow irrigated with open ditches. Wheel line sprinklers were installed on seven hay fields of which four of the fields are gravity fed from one of the two storage reservoirs. An additional 14 acre hay field was converted to gated pipe. By using a complete Irrigation Water Management system they have increased irrigation efficiency by 35-40% and significantly decreased irrigation induced soil erosion. Reduced tillage and direct seeding of their hay fields help to sustain healthy soils and decrease energy use.

Grazing management, lack of water, and poor water distribution had been a concern of the Wilseys for many

years. Some of the pastures and rangeland were forage depleted, under-utilized, contained numerous noxious and invasive weeds, and needed to be restored to a higher quality feed/forage balance. To address these resource concerns Ed and Debby began a pest management system in an effort to control White top, Canada thistle, Scotch thistle, and puncturevine. They seeded over 100 acres, installed more than 3000 ft of cross fencing in four pastures, and applied nutrient management. In addition, the Wilseys implemented a prescribed grazing system on the entire ranch. They combined efforts with BLM and developed 4 additional springs and a livestock pond on their grazing allotment to better distribute their livestock,

graze areas of the range that were previously under-utilized, and relieve grazing pressure on parts that were being over used. Currently the Wilseys are developing an existing livestock well to better distribute livestock water throughout their established pastures. The project includes installing a solar/wind powered pump, 3 ½ miles of livestock pipeline, numerous troughs with wildlife ramps, and a large, insulated storage tank.

Six years ago, the Wilseys decided to raise cattle the way Ed's granddad did: exclusively grass fed with no hormones or antibiotics. Raising natural beef and pork has positioned the Wilseys into a growing market of natural, local, and 'Idaho Preferred' agriculture. In 2009, the Wilseys formed a coop with four other local ranchers and farmers, 'Homestead Natural Foods'. Their collective efforts currently serve a number of Treasure Valley stores and restaurants including the Boise Coop, Red Feather Lounge, Bittercreek Alehouse, Bar Gernika, Donnie Macs, Brick 29, and Bon Appétit at the College of Idaho. In 2010 the coop expanded adding clientele in central Idaho including The Local Dish in Twin Falls as well as Smiley Creek Lodge, Segos and Galena Lodge in Sun Valley. Ed and Debby Wilsey still today carry on a conservation legacy as Ed's granddad always said, "take care of the land and it will take care of you".

For more information, contact the Owyhee Conservation District at 208-896-4544.





# We Are Conservation

## Southwest Idaho

### Valley Soil & Water Conservation District

Tim Hart, Chair

Water Awareness Day was held October 22, 2010 at Fischer Pond in Cascade. Approximately 75 Valley County elementary school students and 35 Cascade high school students took part in this all day event. Representatives from the Boise National Forest, Idaho Fish and Game, Payette National Forest, Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission, DEQ, Cascade Horizons group and Nez Perce tribe led educational activities. Clint Kennedy's high school students also ran water education activities, acted as group leaders and helped with a riparian restoration project.



Several advanced biology students created a planting plan for the area so that plants were placed in appropriate areas for their water and growth requirements. Every student involved planted several plants and learned about the importance of vegetation in ensuring stream and pond health. Over 500 plants were planted around Fischer Pond and at a bank stabilization site by the North Fork Payette River. The plants will provide wildlife habitat, stabilize banks and act as a filter for run-off. Best of all, this area is a popular recreation site and kids will easily be able to come back and see how much the plants have grown.

The 319 grant funded bank stabilization project was initiated by the Friends of Kelly's Whitewater Park and the city of Cascade to stabilize several hundred feet of severely eroding bank. Large rock interspersed with willow pole plantings was placed on the section that receives the most erosive action from high flows. Further downstream, the bank was resloped and terraces created by the placement of coconut fiber rolls planted with willows. Students planted shrubs and forbs on the top of the bank and partway down the bank.

For more information, contact the Valley Soil & Water Conservation District at 208-382-3317.



Costs associated with this publication are available from the Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission in accordance with Idaho Code § 60-202.

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**CONSERVATION  
CONVERSATION**

**Our Mission**

Provide leadership and assistance for natural resource conservation programs in coordination with other local, state, and federal agencies.

Provide support to 50 Idaho conservation districts. Via these local districts, non-regulatory technical assistance, financial incentive programs, and educational programs are provided to private landowners and land users.

**Featured Photo**



A beautiful view of the Monarch Mountains from a kayak on Owens Bay.  
Copyright 2011—Linda O'Hare  
Bonner Soil & Water Conservation District

Have an idea for the next Conservation Conversation? Contact Chuck Pentzer or Kristin Magruder at 208-332-1790 or email [Info@swc.idaho.gov](mailto:Info@swc.idaho.gov). Next issue will feature Central Idaho.

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